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**2008 Legislative Finale**

Last Thursday marked the final day for me to take action on bills from the 2008 legislative session. It was a monumental day -- 2½ hours of festive bill-signing ceremonies that drew hundreds of people to the state Capitol.

I signed legislation that will benefit consumers, military families, conservationists, Boy Scouts and more. But the most profound moment came as we celebrated a legislative package that will improve care and services for people with developmental disabilities.

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## "2008 Legislative Finale" More

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TUESDAY, June 10, 2008

Last Thursday marked the final day for me to take action on bills from the 2008 legislative session. It was a monumental day -- 2½ hours of festive bill-signing ceremonies that drew hundreds of people to the state Capitol.

I signed legislation that will benefit consumers, military families, conservationists, Boy Scouts and more. But the most profound moment came as we celebrated a legislative package that will improve care and services for people with developmental disabilities.

We did more in a single day for people with autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, hearing loss and other developmental disabilities than has ever been done in the history of Colorado.

The 2001 recession hit the developmental disability community hard, and they never fully recovered. That changed on Thursday. We recaptured forward momentum. We gave people who often have no voice in public policy a megaphone. It was a powerful moment -- the perfect way to end the 2008 legislative session.

This will go down in the history books as "The Education Session" because of new laws that will fundamentally change the way we teach students from pre-school to college so they have the skills and knowledge to succeed in today's global economy.

We also invested record amounts into K-12 school construction and higher-ed operating and construction budgets. And we created a long-term, sustainable permanent fund for our public colleges and universities.

Our business-development package was another major accomplishment. We eased the tax burden for thousands of large and small businesses.

We made significant progress on health care reform, including providing coverage to thousands of low-income, uninsured children.

Consumers, senior citizens, veterans, people with Alzheimer's disease and children in foster care came out ahead. We signed legislation to protect Colorado's water supplies, forests and other natural resources. And we continued to build Colorado's New Energy Economy. While last Thursday's ceremony at the Capitol was important, I spent May and early June traveling across Colorado signing legislation with the people and in the communities that inspired many of the 475 bills that became law this year.

I visited Grand Junction, Alamosa, Fort Collins, Keystone, Colorado Springs, Arvada, Aurora, Commerce City, Longmont, Littleton and too many places around Denver to count.

I signed legislation in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and colleges. I signed bills at a solar farm in the San Luis Valley, on a traditional farm in Longmont, and amid the trees in Keystone. I signed legislation in an art gallery, in historic downtown Fort Collins, and at a construction site in downtown Denver.

As we close the book on the 2008 legislative session, we must also bid farewell to many lawmakers who are retiring or leaving the legislature because of term limits, including House Speaker Andrew Romanoff, House Majority Leader Alice Madden, Senate Majority Leader Ken Gordon, and Senate Minority Leader Andy McElhany.

I wish all of them well wherever the future takes them.

Sincerely,

Bill Ritter, Jr.  
Governor